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ABSTRACT

It is important for those interested in contributing to a stable world peace to focus their attention and work on positive, proactive programs that will promote peace building rather than negative, reactive programs intended to reduce violence. This paper focuses on such a training program for international negotiators. The program is intended to develop self-awareness and intercultural communication skills that will enable the negotiators to understand and collaborate with each other more effectively in future negotiations. The impact of these informed negotiations on the process of peace building is assessed. Peace building is a process that takes place through social organizations and relationships that can deal with the conflicts, stresses, and frustrations that are inevitable in international relations without resorting to violent behavior and war. (DB)

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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF PEACE BUILDING PROCESSES

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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF PEACE BUILDING PROCESSES

DR. PAUL R. KIMMEL

INTRODUCTION

There has been a new emphasis in the approach of social scientists to the study of international peace. A few quotes will illustrate some common themes that led to this changed emphasis. Dr. Serge King: "If you put your focus on things the way you would like them to be, or on the good aspects of those things you don't particularly like, that's what you strengthen and in a sense, legitimize; on the contrary, if you keep putting your attention on and resisting what you don't like, you weaken yourself and strengthen it, because energy flows where attention goes. Thus, the more you hate war and those who execute war, the more strength and energy you endow it with; and the more you weaken yourself and make yourself less effective to change things."

Dr. David Edwards: "most social theories ... tend to be theories of conflict and violence rather than of their reduction. ... even when social theories are developed by theorists who consider their work 'peace research' and are explicitly committed to creating a more peaceful world, if [their] theories are theories of war, arms racing, conflict escalation, intergroup hostility, or other socially deleterious phenomena ...[they] legitimate the behavior to which causal efficacy is being attributed ... and disempower the audience ..."

Dr. Paul Kimmel: "most Western social scientists follow the logical-empiricist approach which assumes that their concepts and techniques will eventually produce a 'true' understanding of the phenomena that they are studying. This 'normal science approach' limits their observations, analyses, and conclusions to those that are acceptable in their subculture and their larger national cultures. There is much to recommend the normal science approach within a given culture, especially when that culture includes many of the values undergirding this approach, but the belief that such an approach will arrive at 'truths' and its corrollary that these 'truths' will be universal, has negative implications for international and intercultural studies."

INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION

In a paper presented at the 1990 APA meetings in Boston, I encouraged members of the newly formed Division of Peace Psychology to devote their energies to proactive peace efforts rather than reactive anti-war activities. I suggested that these psychologist study the international processes of building relationships and social structures that promote problem-solving for the mutual benefit and security of all when situations of conflict arise. International negotiations (defined as "the deliberate interaction of two or more complex social units attempting to define the terms of their interdependence") are primary examples of such processes. In my own study of international negotiation at the U. S. Institute of Peace (USIP), I found that negotiators who understand their own subjective cultures and are willing to learn about the subjective cultures of

those with whom they are negotiating, are more likely to reduce misunderstandings and to facilitate the search for mutually acceptable solutions in international meetings. The relationships they form while collaborating on international problems may in turn ameliorate or avert other conflicts based on misunderstandings and promote international agreements that lead to trust among the negotiators and eventually among their nations.

Two obstacles that have hampered our efforts to understand and contribute to such international negotiations and the less violent world that they can engender are an insistance on the normal science approach and a search for universals in human behavior across cultures. A great deal has been written about the limitations of positivistic approaches to the study of human behavior (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985, and Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To create the new ways of thinking that are needed in our nuclear world, we social scientists must be willing to explore approaches and methodologies other than those of normal science (such as those of constructivist inquiry and fourth generation evaluation) in both our research and education efforts. To assist people in situations of conflict to behave productively, we must help them see that there are a multitude of ways of thinking, feeling, reasoning and communicating with each other. We can best help others realize their own potential and value the contributions of others as we become more aware of our own blinders and the limitations of our cultural perspectives and ideologies.

A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR NEGOTIATORS

I believe that the most valuable lessons that we can impart through our research, training and assessment efforts are the notions of learned cultural differences and the value of cultural self-awareness. The notion that everyone potentially has something to offer in the management of conflicts and that no position or approach is absolutely best is crucial to peace building. In the monograph that I am writing about my USIP study, I have detailed the stages of cultural self-awareness in the individual and a training program to assist international negotiators in developing their own awareness and understanding of cultural differences. This morning, I would like to discuss how I would assess the impact of such training on the individual negotiators, on the negotiations in which they are later involved, and on the broader processes of building relationships and social structures that promote problem-solving for mutual benefit and security (peace building). These assessments would not analytically isolate and measure abstract traits or processes (such as empathy, flexibility or moral reasoning) as a normal science approach might, but in keeping with the new emphasis on research and evaluation that I have suggested, would look idiographically at specific contexts in which specific individual behaviors make a difference.

The training of international negotiators that I have proposed involves simulations of specific negotiations in which they have been involved. These simulations would be tailored to each trainee, with the significant difference from the actual negotation being the other negotiator. In the training program, this negotiator would be an actor trained to present perceptions, behaviors and communications that contrast culturally with those of the trainee. After the simulations, the trainees would be guided through a discussion of their experiences with an emphasis on their motivations and those of the actor (perceived). The actor would then return for a similar

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discussion and an interview by the trainee. Finally, the trainees would examine the values and assumptions underlying their behavior and perceptions and those of the actor. The trainees are not told about the training or purpose of the actor.

ASSESSMENT OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

To assess the impact of this training on the individual international negotiators, I would observe the behavior, perceptions and communication of the trainee in subsequent simulations or negotiations. This would be done in three different contexts. First, the trainee would be asked to comment on an edited video of the original simulation. She or he would describe the intent or meaning of several of the behaviors and communications of the actor. Some of these would be repeats of behaviors discussed in the debriefing of the simulation, others would be different. A measure of the impact of the simulation and debriefing would be the change in isomorphism of the trainee's assessments and the actor's actual intentions (what we will call accuracy).

Second, the trainee would be asked to take part in other simulations of different negotiations with the same and/or different actors. The impact of the first simulation and its debriefing would be assessed during the subsequent simulations by observing the extent to which the trainee can more accurately communicate to the actor his or her intentions and feelings and understand the intentions and feelings of the actor. A third measure of impact would be the accuracy of the trainee's assessments of the actor's intentions and perceptions in the debriefings of the subsequent negotiations and in the analyses of the edited videos of these simulations. The assumption, of course, is that after taking part in one simulation and debriefing, the trainee's analytic and communications skills will improve (as seen from the perspective of the actor).

ASSESSMENT OF SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATIONS

This training program would be an easy environment in which to assess the impact of attempts to improve international negotiation skills. Here we have more control of the scenerio and videos of the negotiation processes. The real world of negotiation is much more complex and much less accessible to observation and videotaping. In such situations, the assessment strategies of constructivist inquiry and fourth generation evaluation are especially relevant. The emphasis in this descriptive, ethnographic approach is on reconstructing an event from the viewpoints of those involved. This "naturalistic" approach to assessment is designed to develop context and time bound descriptions and working hypotheses that are joint or collaborative reconstructions of all the parties involved in the inquiry. There is no search for generalizations that are context, time, or value free as there is in the positivist paradigm of normal science. The evaluators state in advance their value orientations and interact with the individuals being evaluated to systematically and empirically reconstruct the impact of a program. The evaluator is a reflective actor in the reflexive social reality of the assessment process.

In training programs such as mine, the designer of the program should also be involved in the assessment process. The reason for this is apparent in the three assessments described above,

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since these assessments are a part of the training itself. When the assessment is of a real world negotiation involving one or more of the trainees, the reasoning is less obvious. Indeed, the conventional wisdom of the normal science approach indicates that the evaluation should not be undertaken by those involved in the training, but by an "independent" third party so there is "no bias" in the assessment.

The constructivist paradigm argues, however, that there are no neutral, unbiased or independent third parties. Social reality is fundamentally indeterminate and all social scientists will bring their social constructs and values to bear on whatever they assess. (What often passes for neutrality or impartiality is usually a position that is in keeping with the social status quo.) If one accepts the constructivist paradigm, it becomes apparent that the more sophisticated and informed the evaluators are about the programs they are assessing, the more likely they are to promote an isomorphic reconstruction of the social impact of that program in their evaluation. In addition, the designer of a training program like mine - which stresses self-awareness and insight into the cultural values and assumptions that underlie trainees' behaviors, feelings and perceptions - must be sensitive to his own values and assumptions and capable of explicating them to those he is training and evaluating. Therefore, I believe that a good case can be made for including myself in all of the assessments of the impact of this training program, as long as I follow the systematic and replicable procedures of fourth generation evaluation.[1] The social role of assessor will contribute to my work as program developer in that I will be regularly receiving feedback about the program from those most affected by it.

At the level of real world negotiations, this feedback will come primarily from interviews and discussions with the international negotiators involved in the these negotiations. To ascertain whether they have become more collaborative, developed trust and respect for each other, found common ground on which more of their beliefs, values and assumptions are negotiable, and are perceived by other negotiators as understanding and gracious (outcomes and processes that would be expected from the training) will require both individual and group conversations. These conversations would occur at several points before, during and after the negotiations to reconstruct not only any changes, but also the specific behaviors and communications associated with them.

In addition to assessing the impact of the previous training program on the negotiators and providing information that would improve the development of future training programs, this constructivist inquiry would also empower the negotiators in the real world negotiation and affect their behaviors and communications in their meetings. As Lincoln and Guba point out, fourth generation evaluation is a teaching/learning process in which all stakeholders including the

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[1] The fourth generation evaluator must "act not only as the technician who facilitates the process but as an active participant who shapes the product as well ... in fourth generation evaluation, the evaluator is a key figure in a process that creates a new and more sophisticated 'reality' that has built into it direct and immediate implications for action (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 262)."

evaluator(s) teach and learn from each other. Since the primary goal of my training program is helping the negotiators to learn how to learn during their future negotiations, fourth generation evaluation is entirely compatible with my training and, indeed, can be seen as an integral aspect of it.

ASSESSMENT OF PEACE BUILDING

In evaluating the impact of these real world negotiations (which involve individuals trained and/or assessed by me) on the broader processes of building relationships and social structures that promote problem-solving for mutual benefit and security (what I have called peace building), I am interested in two different levels of reconstruction: the near term outcomes of the negotiations themselves and the longer range implications of these outcomes and of the behaviors of the negotiators for their countries and the world. In looking at the outcomes, I am interested both in the "solutions" the negotiators create to the problems facing them and in any changes that occur in their relationships with each other and with their constituents. In my monograph, I suggest that culturally sensitive and skilled negotiators can create hybrid solutions that could not have been created by the individuals acting independently or without increased cultural sensitivity. To test these working hypotheses, I would look at the solutions generated in negotiations involving the trained negotiators and compare these with the solutions to similar (current or past) problems arrived at by non-trained negotiators. The criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the different solutions would be a pragmatic one: which of the solutions are accepted by the countries involved and which of these in turn are most successful in managing conflicts and precluding violence?

The implications of the training and negotiations for the countries of the negotiators would be assessed by looking at how officials and the public responded to and implemented the solutions proposed by their negotiators. While immediate reactions of the government, the media and the public are important and therefore would be measured by standard survey research techniques, I am more interested in the longer term implications of the negotiated outcomes and of the relationships formed by the negotiators. To what extent do these contribute to peace building?

Peace building takes place through social organizations and relationships that can deal with the conflicts, stresses and frustrations that are inevitable in international relations without resorting to violent behavior and war. Fourth generation evaluations will be very difficult to conduct at the international level of peace building due to the variety and number of stakeholders and the long time spans involved. However, it should be possible to conduct evaluations of this type in each of the negotiator's countries to reconstruct and promote the beginnings of the social processes that lead to the social organizations and relationships associated with peace building. These evaluations would be sociopolitical processes in keeping with constructivist inquiry.[2] They would also be local assessments as their outcomes would depend on local contexts, local informants and

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[2] "Social, cultural and political aspects, far from being merely distracting or distorting nuisances, are integral to the process, at least as important as are considerations of technical adequacy (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 263)."

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stakeholders, and local values and assumptions. Each of these evaluations would be undertaken separately and would elicit and take into account political input in the local reconstructions of a wide range of stakeholders. These reconstructions should include the social, economic and cultural changes that have come from the negotiations, as well as the political impacts.

The longer term consequences of these peace building efforts will be seen internationally in the development of social organizations like the Nordic Council, the EEC, and Cooperation North in Ireland; in social programs like the German Marshall Fund, the Good Neighbors, Sister Cities and Partners; and in the proliferation of international meetings and negotiations designed to find creative solutions to common problems. Again at the international level, you will notice that the focus of my assessments are on the positive, constructive and collaborative aspects of international relations. In keeping with Serge King's advice at the beginning of my talk, these are what I seek to create and legitimize through my training program and fourth generation evaluations. Of course, I am interested in increases or decreases in violent behaviors and events such as crimes, accidents and wars, but these are not the focus of my work. I expect a decrease in the resort to violence by individuals and negotiators in international relationships and social structures that promote peace building. I choose to support and develop these individuals through training and assessment programs that encourage peace building behavior rather than working on eliminating international behaviors I don't like like coercion and war.

SUMMARY

I have suggested that it is important for those interested in contributing to a stable world peace to focus their attention and work on positive, proactive programs that will promote peace building rather than negative, reactive programs intended to reduce violence. I have discussed briefly such a program of training for international negotiators. I have shown how this program will develop self awareness and intercultural communication skills that will enable these negotiators to better understand and collaborate with each other in future negotiations. I have proposed a constructivist approach for the assessment of these training programs and the subsequent negotiations that will create additional understanding and collaboration among the trainees and those with whom they negotiate.

I have also suggested that these informed negotiations will have an impact of the peace building efforts of the negotiators and their constituencies through the development of relationships and social structures that promote problem-solving for the mutual benefit and security of all when situations of conflict arise. I proposed that these peace building efforts can be assessed both by conventional survey research techniques in the near term and by constructivist inquiry within countries. International assessment will be more difficult, but should be possible if the focus of the assessments is on development and accomplishments of cooperative international organizations, programs, meetings and negotiations.